Water Softener County Survey

Number of Counties/Regions Contacted: 38

Responses: 13

County	Contact	Problems yes/no/maybe	Comments
Broadwater	Melissa Tuemmler	N	No documented failures due to water softeners. Failures usually due to undersized systems
Sweetgrass	Rod Fink	N	Few failures in general in this county. Failures due to improper construction or hydraulic overloading.
Stillwater	Travis West	M	No documented failures due to water softeners. But believes that water softeners and RO units contribute to failures due to hydraulic overloading. And believes that salts cause clays to swell. Thinks there should be separate disposal systems for water softeners and RO units.
Jefferson	Megan Bullock	N	Believes research shows that properly operated/maintained water softeners will not harm on-site systems.
Garfield	Brian Schoof	N	No problems with water softeners.
Cascade Meagher	Brian Clifton	M	No problems with water softeners and clay soils, but has seen problems with hydraulic overloading caused by recirculation switch failure. Not in favor of water softener ban, but designers should size septic systems to accommodate larger flows from addition of backwash.
Sheridan Roosevelt Daniels	Ron Smith	N	No complaints/reports/concerns of septic system failures due to water softeners, and not aware of any problems associated with water softeners in northeastern Montana.
Flathead	Glen Gray	N	No documented failures, but has concerns with equipment malfunction putting large volumes of salt into the septic system. Believes that new technology will prevent such problems.

Lake	Susan Brueggeman	M	Susan provided letter from septic tank pumper stating that he has not seen septic systems that actually failed due to water softeners, but has seen filters that have become clogged due to lack of bacterial activity breaking down solids. Recommended using potassium salt in water softener and placing Baker's yeast in toilet once a year. Bob Roth, a Norweco dealer, also called on behalf of Susan and said that most problems with water softeners are due to improper operation of the water softener (adding too much salt can interfere with biological activity and cause a hard layer to form in septic tank) such that the system is no longer treating effluent at an optimum level. Bob said that education is the key and that the state should provide guidance rather than a strict rule, and that the state should defer to local knowledge on proper use and operation of water softeners. Bob later sent a copy of a letter from an industry engineer stating that the chemical balance is important to septic tank performance, and that the softener should be regenerated as efficiently as possible based on water demand.
Dawson Prairie Wibaux	Dennis Snow	N	No problems observed. May not have many water softeners in area since water is naturally soft. Has seen about 1% failure rate due to use of RO units.
Lincoln	Kendra Lind	N	No failures observed. Believes that most water softeners backwash into dry wells. Also talked to licensed septic installers and one installer mentioned a situation where salt from backwash killed vegetation around drainfield area. County recommends that no backwash go into septic systems, but is unaware of any failures that can be attributable to backwash.
Pondera Teton	Corrine Rose	N	Thinks that most water softeners in homes backwash to septic systems. Corrine also contacted installers who commented that they have not seen any problems with water softener backwash and septic systems, but that excess water on borderline systems could cause hydraulic overloading and saturate the drainfield.
Valley	Cam Shipp	M	Some failed systems did have water softeners or RO units. Believes that some of the system failures were due to hydraulic overloading from water softener and RO system discharge.